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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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Veterans Legislation Advances to Full House

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs advanced three bills to the full House for consideration. The improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012, as amended (H.R. 4057), the Military Family Home Protection Act, as amended (H.R. 5747), and the Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012, as amended (H.R. 5948) all unanimously passed the Full Committee at this morning's markup.

"These bills contain provisions from seventeen different legislative proposals, and represent a considerable amount of the work done by the Committee this session," said Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "I thank all of our Members for their bipartisan work to not only move legislation forward, but also for what we have done through oversight to shine a light on both the good things America does for our veterans, as well as to address issues and improve VA care and operations."

The Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act (H.R. 4079), introduced by Rep. David McKinley was included in H.R. 4057. "I was so happy that I could use my engineering background to help our veterans. After touring homeless shelters in the 1st District of West Virginia, and seeing the conditions with my own eyes, we began to investigate whether this was an isolated case or if part of a bigger problem," said McKinley. "It was unsettling to learn in our research about shelter fires where lives were lost because of numerous code violations. This bill will ensure our homeless veterans have access to safe shelters nationwide."

The Open Burn Pit Registry Act (H.R. 3337), introduced by Rep. Todd Akin, was also advanced as a provision of H.R. 4057. "We have sent our best and brightest young men and women into harm's way, and it is our responsibility as a nation to take care of them when they return," said Akin. "There is a growing body of evidence that burn pits have had tragic effects on the health of some of our returning veterans. We need to deal with this problem proactively to ensure that our veterans get the best possible care and support."

The Veterans Fiduciary Reform Act of 2012 (H.R. 5948), introduced by Rep. Bill Johnson, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, was also favorably reported to the full House. Rep. Johnson has been investigating fraud within VA's Fiduciary Program for more than a year.

"This critical legislation is an important step forward to protecting America's veterans from abuses in the VA fiduciary system. Our investigations showed that VA's current fiduciary system leaves many veterans vulnerable to financial risk. We performed our chief function as the oversight body for VA, found the flaws, and put forth common sense legislation to tackle this very serious problem," said Johnson. "Sending this bill to the House floor furthers our commitment to giving veterans the best care and benefits possible. America's heroes, our veterans, have earned these benefits and we must make sure they receive them. They deserve nothing less."

The House has passed 16 Committee-reported veterans bills this Congress, four of which are now law.

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